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Press Release

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PALO ALTO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SURVEYS SHOW OVERWHELMING BUSINESS SUPPORT FOR STREET CLOSURES ON UNIVERSITY AND CALIFORNIA AVENUES

The Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce is today releasing summary results of two surveys concerning street closures for pedestrian mall pilot projects on University and California Avenues.
Surveys were conducted with businesses in the two commercial zones over the past 10 days. The results show an extraordinarily high percentage of support for partial street closures on both streets.

- The response from **University Avenue** businesses was 61% "strongly in favor" and 22% "in favor with reservations," for a **total of 83% in favor**.   16% were "opposed."

  o University Avenue respondents included 20% restaurants/bakeries/cafés, 16% essential businesses (non-restaurant, non-hotel), street level/non-essential retail businesses accounted for 22%, non-retail/non-essential businesses accounted for 33%, 3% hotels, and 5% "other" (e.g. psychotherapist, spa).

- The response from **California Avenue** businesses was 81% "strongly in favor" and 12% "in favor with reservations," for a **total of 93%. in favor**.   8% were "opposed."

  o California Avenue respondents included 13% essential businesses (non-restaurant, non-hotel), 41% restaurants/bakeries/cafés, 3% hotels, and 29% non-essential retail and professional/general office businesses, and 24% "other" (e.g. church, FedEx office, antique services).

- 63% of University Ave respondents and 79% of Cal Ave respondents agreed that the **street closures should be all days of the week**. "With reduced car activity, this is a good time to try it out and see how it works." *(survey text for approval or non-approval by respondents)*

- 66% of University Ave respondents and 45% of Cal Ave respondents agreed that "to encourage longer shopping periods and accommodate pedestrian walk-time, [the City should] **extend weekday parking hours for both street and garage parking**." *(survey text for approval or non-approval by respondents)*

- Respondents were also supportive of sidewalk tables and parklets - restaurants using street parking spaces for outdoor tables - as a way for the City to help restaurants reopen successfully.

"We believe the survey results strongly reinforce the recent outpouring of hundreds of emails from residents and businesses asking the City to help commercial districts recover from the Covid-19 closures by partially closing two of our main commercial streets to cars and allowing businesses to safely serve customers outdoors," stated Judy Kleinberg, President of the Chamber of Commerce.

The Chamber is working with Palo Alto city staff on the proposed street closure pilot programs, as well as a new City fund to support restaurants with reopening expenses (such as outdoor tables and PPEs), so that both businesses and the City are ready to implement the accommodations necessary to "share streets" as soon as Santa Clara County allows businesses to reopen. "Our goal is to help our businesses reopen safely and for Palo Alto to be ready to go just as soon as the County gives us the green light," said Kleinberg.

Examples of favorable comments by respondents include:

- "Born and raised in Palo Alto, we have lost that home-town feeling. I love the street closures and what they have done in places like Boulder, Colorado and even Redwood City."

- "It will draw people to downtown Palo Alto …and moving cars off University Avenue will make that area more attractive to all – just as the festivals did."

- "Opening streets to outdoor seating would be brilliant for the community and essential for restaurants to survive. Strongly appreciate and support this idea."

- "While I do not want to see parking downtown diminished, I think losing one-third or more restaurants would have a far greater negative impact on the downtown area than parking."

- "We either put our tables and chairs outside on the street or sidewalk, or we go broke and close forever."

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